

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SAN JOSE 6006

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: SHUM, CS, CU, CI, PFOR
SUBJECT: POSSIBILITY OF HUBERT MATOS-JORGE MONTES EXCHANGE
STIRS LOCAL INTEREST

BEGIN UNCLASSIFIED

1. SUMMARY. THE SUCCESSFUL CORVALAN/BUKOVSKY EXCHANGE BETWEEN CHILE AND THE USSR HAS KINDLED LOCAL INTEREST IN THE POSSIBILITY OF IMPLEMENTING THE CHILEAN-PROPOSED MONTES/MATOS SWAP. THE GOCR IS BEING URGED TO INTERVENE WITH CUBA ON BEHALF OF MATOS. END SUMMARY

2. PRESIDENT ODUBER ANNOUNCED DECEMBER 19 THAT HE WOULD BE MEETING WITHIN A FEW DAYS WITH A GROUP OF EXILED CHILEAN LEFTISTS INTERESTED IN A GOCR GESTURE SUPPORTING THE RELEASE OF POLITICAL PRISONERS BY THE PINOCHET GOVERNMENT. THE PRESIDENT REAFFIRMED HIS SUPPORT FOR THE UNIVERSALITY OF HUMAN RIGHTS REGARDLESS OF POLITICAL IDEOLOGY AND SAID HE WOULD THEREFORE ASK THE CHILEAN GROUP TO INTERCEDE WITH THE CUBANS IN BEHALF OF HUBER MATOS. ODUBER'S DECLARATION WAS OBVIOUSLY INSPIRED BY THE ANNOUNCEMENT THE PRECEDING DAY OF THE SUCCESSFUL CORVALAN/BUKOVSKY EXCHANGE.

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3. OPPOSITION DEPUTY FERNANDO ALTMANN (PRD) DECEMBER 20, INTRODUCED A MOTION IN THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY CALLING FOR THE GOCR TO PETITION THE CUBANS TO AGREE ON A MATOS/MONTES EXCHANGE. THE ASSEMBLY, ENDING AN EXTRAORDINARY SESSION, DID NOT ACT ON ALTMANN'S MOTION.

4. LEADING DAILY LA NACION DECEMBER 21 CALLED ON THE GOCR TO TAKE THE DIPLOMATIC LEAD IN THE HEMISPHERE IN PRESSING FOR A MATOS-MONTES EXCHANGE. THE PAPER CITED THE RELATIVELY GOOD RELATIONS (EVEN THOUGH THEY ARE NOT FOJPAL) BETWEEN CUBA AND COSTA RICA AS THE BASIS FOR AILOSTA RICAN INITIATIVE. IT ALSO COMMENTED THAT THE BUKOVSKY/CORVALAN PRECEDENT ELIMINATED ANY VALID CUBAN ARGUMENT AGAINST THE PROPOSED EXCHANGE. LA REPUBLICA DECEMBER 22 ECHOED LA NACION'S CALL FOR AN ACTIVE GOCR ROLE IN ATTEMPTING TO FREE MATOS.

5. HUBER MATOS, JR., WHO RESIDES IN SAN JOSE, ALSO ASKED THE GOCR THROUGH PRESIDENT ODUBER PUBLICLY TO SUPPORT THE PROPOSED EXCHANGE. HE IS QUOTED THAT "COSTA RICA CAN LIBERATE MY FATHER IF PRESIDENT ODUBER INTERVENES." IN ADDITION, MATOS, JR., WHO REPORTEDLY HAD JUST RETURNED FROM VISIT TO CHILE, REQUESTED THAT MEXICAN PRESIDENT LOPEZ PORTILLO AND VENEZUELAN PRESIDENT PEREZ MAKE DIRECT EFFORTS IN HIS FATHER'S BEHALF.

6. PRO-GOVERNMENT EXCELSIOR DECEMBER 23 HEADLINE AFP STORY FROM ZURICH STATING THAT VLADMIR BUKOVSKY SENT MESSAGES TO PRESIDENTS OF COSTA RICA, MEXICO AND VENEZUELA ASKING THEIR INTERVENTION WITH CASTRO IN A MATOS-MONTES EXCHANGE. MEDIA ALSO CARRY UPI DISPATCH FROM WASHINGTON THAT MRS. MATOS HAS MET WITH "HIGH STATE DEPARTMENT FUNCTIONAIRES" AND THAT USG HAS SUGGESTED THAT VENEZUELA BE REQUEUAED TO USE ITS GOOD OFFICES TO OBTAIN MATOS' RELEASE. END UNCLASSIFIED.

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7. COMMENT: IF THE ODUBER GOVERNMENT COULD SWING IT, IT WOULD
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LIKE TO PLAY A PART IN A MATOS EXCHANGE. THIS IS THE TYPE OF
PROBLEM-SOLVING MODERATE ROLE THAT APPEALS TO GOCR. ACCORDING

TO A FOREIGN MINISTRY SOURCE, FRIENDSHIP OF HIGH GOVERNMENT
OFFICIALS WITH MATOS FAMILY HERE IS ALSO A KEY FACTOR IN ANY
HELPFUL ROLE COSTA RICA MIGHT PLAY IN THIS MATTER.
HOWEVER, ACCORDING TO SAME OFFICIAL, THERE HAS BEEN NO EXCHANGE
EFFORT MADE SO FAR BY GOCR. END CONFIDENTIAL. TODMAN

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